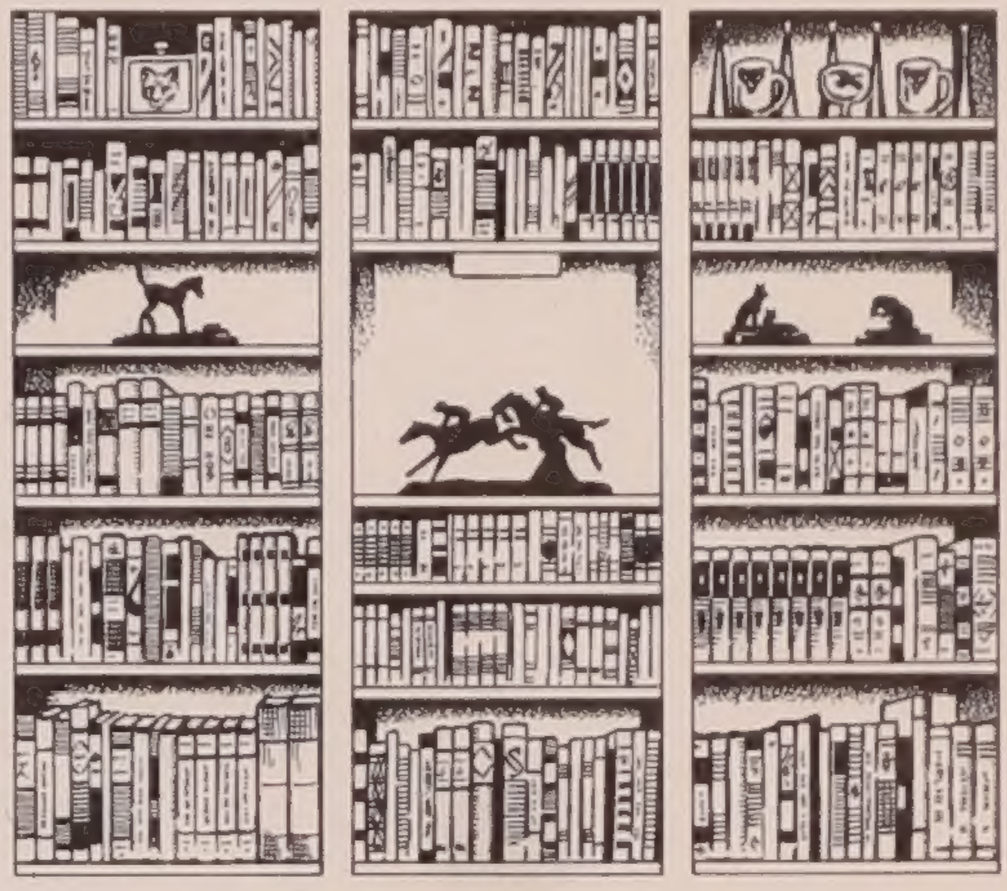
COVERT AND FIELD SPORT

THE BRITISH SPORT SERIES



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JOHN AND MARTHA DANIELS

Old-Time Partridge Shooting.

Painting by G. D. Armour.

J. M. HUMOUR

COVERT AND FIELD SPORT

BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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THE BRITISH SPORT SERIES

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

PARTRIDGE SHOOTING

SHOOTING, as we understand it, dates from Queen Anne's time. In the year 1700 J. Sprint, of his practical knowledge, had given the world a very small book entitled the *Experienc'd Fowler*, from whose pages we obtain a lucid idea of the methods in his day. As Mr. Sprint and his contemporaries used a flint-lock gun, 'with a barrel of five foot and a half, cleverly made taper,' it perhaps goes without saying that a rest was necessary for its efficient use, and shooting birds on the wing was a business demanding some adjustment. Mr. Sprint was not wedded to a five-foot six-inch barrel: he readily accords permission to his readers to use a gun with one six feet long, if any might think it possible to obtain better results therewith. And it is evident that the more ambitious, or muscular, among the brethren were not quite satisfied with that: 'Six foot,' says Mr. Sprint, 'is a sufficient length for the barrel of any piece; all above are unmanageable and tiresome.' One wonders how he would have

regarded sportsmen who have an idea that a gun should fit the user, come well up to the shoulder, and who measure its weight in ounces.

With such 'pieces' our seventeenth-century ancestors took the field in pairs in search of wild-fowl: and game being descried, he who was to take the flying shot planted his rest and levelled his gun 'three yards from the ground, a little inclining to the way you see their heads stand.' Your preparations completed, the other man fired at the birds sitting, and you loosed off 'as soon as ever he . . . has pulled his tricker and flashes in the pan, or at least if you are very near as soon as you hear the report of his piece.' A shoulder shot might be taken if you could meet the birds 'in the face the way they fly': in which case the sportsman took 'the undermost and shot slaunt-wise through them.'

A century before Mr. Sprint's time the law[1] had enacted that partridges, pheasants, grouse, and hares might not be killed with a gun at all. Discriminating legislators realised that marksman and matchlock made a combination too deadly where sitting game was the mark, and forbade shooting altogether, whether with gun, crossbow, or other weapon.

The 'setting dog' and hawk, the stalking horse

[1] 1 Jac., c. 27, § 2 (1603-4).

or the setting dog and net, formed the proper means of taking game, and these methods remained in favour long after men began to shoot flying. With hawking we do not here deal: as regards netting Nicolas Cox[1] gives instructions how to set about the business. First you had to ascertain where a covey might be found: as a preliminary the sportsman mastered the call of the bird:—

'Being perfect herein, either mornings or evenings (all other times being improper) go to their haunts, and having conveyed yourself into some secret place where you may see and not be seen, listen a while if you can hear the *partridges* call; if you can answer them again in the same note, and as they change or double their notes, so must you in like manner; thus continue doing until they draw nearer and nearer unto you. Having them in your view, lay yourself on your back, and lie as if you were dead, without motion, by which means you may count their whole number.

'Having attained to the knowledge of discovering them where they lie, the next thing will be a ready way how to catch them.'

Cox held 'the driving of partridges' more delightful than any other method. This involved the use of

[1] *The Gentleman's Recreation*, 1686.

an engine made in form and fashion of a horse cut out of canvas and stuffed with straw or similar material. Equipped with this artificial horse and his nets the sportsman sought partridges where, by calling, he had ascertained a covey to lie, and pitched his nets down-wind of them. This done, under the cover of the stalking horse, and his face covered with something green or dark-blue, the sportsman stalked the partridges carefully lest they took wing, and drove them slowly 'running naturally' to the net.

Possession of a setting dog relieved the sportsman of the necessity for learning to call. Let Cox describe the sport in his own words:—

'Having a dog thus qualified by art and nature, take him with you where *partridges* do haunt; there call off your dog, and by some word of encouragement that he is acquainted with, engage him to range, but never too far from you; and see that he beat his ground justly and even, without casting about, or flying now here, now there, which the mettle of some will do if not corrected and reproved. And therefore, when you perceive this fault, you must presently call him in with a hem, and so check him that he dare not do the like again for that day. So will he range afterwards with more temperance, ever and anon looking in his master's face, as if he

would gather from thence whether he did well or ill. If in your dog's ranging you perceive him to stop on the sudden, or stand still, you must then make in to him (for without doubt he hath set the *partridge*) and as soon as you come to him, command him to go nearer ; but if he goes not, but either lies still or stands shaking his tail, as who would say, Here they are under my nose, and withal now and then look back ; then cease from urging him further, and take your circumference, walking fast with a careless eye, looking straight before the nose of the dog, and thereby see how the covey lie, whether close or straggling.

'Then commanding the dog to lie still draw forth your net, and prick one end to the ground, and spread your net all open, and so cover as many of the *partridges* as you can ; which done make in with a noise, and spring up the *partridges* ; which shall no sooner rise than they will be entangled in the net.'

The net afforded facilities for choosing your birds when you had got them. 'If,' says our authority, tactfully combining appeal to our nobler feelings with reminder of material interests, 'you shall let go the old cock and hen, it will not only be an act like a gentleman, but a means to increase your pastime.'

Shooting on the wing made progress in the early

years of the eighteenth century. By the year 1718 the long barrels of a few years earlier had been discarded except for wild fowl. 'A piece,' says Giles Jacob,[1] 'of about three foot and a half long in the barrel, by a more perfect mixture of the metal and skilful boring, will do more execution in the pursuit of land fowl than your long guns: and no body is unsensible but it is less labour and fatigue to the bearer.' So far as we can gather from Jacob —a somewhat unsafe guide, as certain passages in his book bear suspicious likeness to passages in Sprint's—the sportsman had not yet acquired the habit of picking his bird: but this improvement was not long to be delayed. Nine years later Mr. Markland produced his poetic discourse on shooting:[2] his Preface contains evidence that picking one's bird was then quite a new idea in England: also that the practice was not productive of satisfactory results. Having discussed the curious moral effect of a first miss on the whole day's performances (it seems, he says thoughtfully, to result in 'a disorder of the animal spirits occasioned by the original Disappointment'), he proceeds:—

'I have often wondered why the French, of all mankind, should alone be so expert at the gun,

[1] *The Compleat Sportsman*, 1718.

[2] *Pteryphlegia, or the Art of Shooting Flying*, 1727.

I had almost said infallible. It's as rare for a profess'd marksman of that nation to miss a bird as for one of ours to kill. But, as I have been since informed, they owe this excellence to their education. They are trained up to it so very young, that they are no more surpriz'd or alarm'd with a pheasant than with a rattle-mouse [bat]. The best field-philosophers living: for they are always there masters of their temper.'

In 1804 Lord Craven killed 1,600 during a few days in Ashdown Park, Berks. In 1807 upwards of 6,000 were shot on Sir Thomas Goode's lands in Suffolk. This seems to have been done in the farmers' interest. Arthur Young, writing of a visit to Suffolk in 1784,[1] says that Mr. Grose had been accustomed to cultivate carrots on his farm at Capel St. Andrews, but his crops were so pillaged by the enormous number of hares that he was 'determined to sow no more.' Preservation of the hares 'nursed up a breed of rabbits which add to the evil.'

Partridge shooting continued very much as it had been in Markland's time till within living memory. No doubt the marksmanship gradually improved, but as nobody thought it worth while to leave for posterity a diary showing how many shots he fired

[1] *Annals of Agriculture*, vol. ii.

and how many birds he killed during each of a series of seasons, we can only take improvement for granted. Aspiring game shots did not suffer from lack of printed assistance: various books on Shooting Flying were published during the eighteenth century, and at least one after, the latest I have seen being Thomas's *Guide* (1809), which included Instruction to Attain the Art. Practice at swallows was recommended by some. Thomas considered a course of sparrow shooting better preparation for the field.

A 14-bore gun was generally used. At a later period sportsmen had taken advantage of the reduction in length of barrel to try larger bores, for Mr. Lemon, 'the most able park and gamekeeper,' who wrote an undated tract on shooting during the later years of the century, tells us that there is 'not the utility in a wide bore some sportsmen use,' and it should not exceed 'the size called fifteens,' the barrel not more than thirty-eight inches long.

Particulars of bags made in the days of long stubbles, tall hats and Joe Mantons—for a long period Joe Manton and game gun were almost interchangeable terms—may be of interest. The *Sporting Magazine* of 1803, among the 'returns of the best gentlemen shots on the first day of September, gives the following :—

Pheasant Shooting:
Old Style.

Painting by G. D. Armour.

'Mr. Coke bagged with his own gun 22 brace of partridges at Holkham: General Lennox brought home 14 brace at Goodwood. Lord Fitzharris, on a visit to the Earl of Pembroke at Wilton in Wiltshire, brought down 13 brace before breakfast, and going out again in the course of the day he made up the number to 20½ brace.' The best bag recorded for that 'First' was the Hon. Thomas Coventry's 28½ brace in Gloucestershire. On 1st September 1810 Lord Kingston shot 41½ brace to his own gun at Heydon, having undertaken to kill 40 brace.

Single-barrelled guns appear to have been almost universally used at this time. Colonel Thornton, when on his tour in Scotland [1] used a double-barrelled gun, but his opinion of it was not a high one. On 15th September 'I gave up my double-barrel gun for the season: and here I must remark that I look upon all double barrels as trifles, rather nick nacks than useful.'[2] When such a gun was used the fact was deemed worthy of remark, if we may judge from this paragraph in the *Sporting Magazine* of 1803:—

'On the 5th September, Mr. John Walton, game-

[1] A *Sporting Tour*, 1804. Daniel (*Rural Sports*, vol. ii. p. 270) mentions 1784 as the year in which the expedition was made.

[2] Double-barrelled guns had been made in Charles II.'s time, *vide* Duke of Portland's MSS. (*Hist. MSS. Comm.*), vol. ii. p. 299.

keeper to Henry Blundell, Esq., of Ince, went out with a double-barrelled gun, attended by one dog, and in the course of the day killed 22½ brace of partridges.'

A few years later a 'thoughtless propensity to kill *all the game* possible' seemed 'to mark a new era in shooting.' 'This rage for destruction presents itself in the shape of a struggle for exhibiting the largest number of certain *animals* to be extirpated within a *few hours*.' The bag made by Lord Rendelsham and party during the last week of the season in 1807 is cited as an example; it comprised 3,775 head.

The standard by which bags were tried in those days was a very modest one by comparison with modern times. In 1811 at Holkham, 'wher Earl Moira and several other shots of distinction were down on a visit to Mr. Coke . . . *six days* produced the following enormous list of slaughter, viz.: pheasants 264, partridges 314, woodcocks 29, snipe 46, hares 283, rabbits 371. Total killed 1,307.' (Daniel).

The 'enormous list of slaughter' would no doubt have been larger, had it not been that 'a Royal Duke was one of the destructive corps.' And His Royal Highness was an indifferent shot. 'His return, or

rather the return made for him, was of a *different* kind, viz.:—

Killed of game . . .	0	
Wounded in legs . .	1	*Foot-marker*, slightly.
Wounded in the face . .	1	*Groom*, severely.
Wounded on the head of a Friend	1	*Hat.*
Ditto on the left Rump .	1	*Horse.*

As regards proportion of kills to shots fired in the earlier decades of the century, the remarkable shooting journal kept by Lord Malmesbury for forty seasons, 1798 to 1840, throws light on this point. Lord Malmesbury during this period killed 38,475 head, having fired 54,987 shots. His bag included 10,744 partridges, 6,320 pheasants, 4,694 snipe, 1,080 'cock, 5,211 hares, 17,417 rabbits. The Hon. George Grantley Berkeley estimates that Lord Malmesbury walked 36,200 miles during the forty seasons: and adds that he fired away 750 lbs. of powder and 4 tons of shot.

On 9th December, 1811, the Gamekeepers of Suffolk held their annual meeting at Bury to present a large silver powder-flask 'to the keeper who should produce the certificates for the greatest quantity of hares, pheasants, and rabbits *shot at* as well as *killed* during any six days from the 8th October to the

8th December. Richard Sharnton won the prize : his list averaged three guns and his extent of preserve 4,000 acres :—

	Killed.	Missed.
Cock Pheasants	378	199
Hen ,, ...	51	33
Partridges	506	301
Hares	177	94

This same Sharnton also produced an account of the vermin he had destroyed during the preceding twelve months. It included 22 foxes (!), 446 stoats, and 167 'hawks of all kinds' : he also killed 7 'wild cats,' but we may take leave to doubt whether these were not domestic strays from the path of virtue.

In 1811 Mr. G. Clark of Worlingham, Suffolk, backed himself to kill 47 birds in fifty shots : he killed 59 in sixty shots, having missed the forty-ninth bird.

Forsyth's percussion system was invented in 1808, and a percussion gun was successfully tested against a flint-lock ; but we were ever slow to adopt novelties, and percussion guns only began to come into general use during the 'twenties, copper caps having been invented about 1825.[1] Some old hands remained faithful to the flint-lock long after it had been discarded by the majority. Sir Richard Sutton was one of these conservative sportsman : his fidelity,

[1] Messrs. Eley made waterproof caps in 1837.

however, to the old style of gun was, says the late Mr. Corrance, 'a mere freak.'

The introduction of the percussion gun made no difference in the size of bags. It was regarded as unbecoming to sell game[1] in those days, and what the sportsman did not want for his own house was given away. Large bags were made on occasion, but such were usually the outcome of wagers. One of the most notable of these was the match, in October, 1823, between Lord Kennedy shooting at Monreith in Wigtownshire against Mr. William Coke shooting at Holkham, who should make the largest bag in two days. Lord Kennedy got between 40 and 50 brace and Mr. Coke 93 brace on the first day: on the second their bags were 93½ and 96 brace respectively, an attempt having been made by Lord Kennedy to kill 100 brace. Sir William Maxwell says that his father, over whose land Lord Kennedy shot, declared nothing would induce him to allow another match on his ground: it was 'strewn with cripples' for days after. The usual sportsmanlike rule, strictly observed in these times, never to let a wounded bird escape, was evidently set aside for this match.

Mr. Tharp, owner of Chippenham Park, made a

[1] The London market, says Daniel (*Rural Sports*, supp. vol., 1813), was principally supplied by poachers; the prices given were so high that poaching was very profitable and the encounters between these men and the gamekeepers only too frequently had fatal results.

bag of 99 birds one day in October 1826. He began at 8 a.m., using one dog and one gun: he was so knocked up at three o'clock that he could not go on and complete his 50 brace.

The best partridge shooting in the days of William IV. was in the turnips. The swede had been introduced, and swedes sown broad cast provided much better cover than the roots sown by drill at a later day. In the later 'fifties reaping machines came into use and steadily ousted scythe and reaping-hook, till long stubbles became a thing of the past. The invention of the loading-rod was a great improvement, enabling the muzzle-loader to be recharged much more rapidly than of old. Colonel J. E. Goodall has been kind enough to give me a description of this implement which has now, apparently, been almost forgotten. It was made of stout Malacca cane, was two or three inches longer than the gun-barrel and two-thirds the diameter of the bore: flat at one end and carrying a round or flattened ball at the other. Its superiority over the ramrod lay in its greater strength and convenience. When the ramrod was used, the shooter after each discharge had to stop and reload, resting the butt on his boot-toe or on the ground, and restore the ramrod to its place: in wet or snow, moreover, the dirt on the heel-plate

was transferred to the shoulder. The 'loading-rod' or 'shooting-stick' was much stronger than the ramrod, which was liable to break if not carefully handled and when it was used the shooter held his gun firmly in his left hand while he rammed home the wads with his right, without stopping to rest the butt on the ground. The rod was carried in a leather socket fastened by a lug to a button sewn at a convenient height on the coat.

This innovation brought a change in the style of partridge shooting. In ramrod days dogs dropped to the shot, and nobody thought of advancing till the gun had been recharged. Soon after the loading-rod came into use, the second gun carried by a loader was introduced, and the pause to recharge after a shot was abandoned, the advance being continuous.

Pointer and setter held their own until the appearance of the breech-loader: guns on this principle had been made for twenty years before they reached a stage of perfection that gave them claim on the shooting man's notice. The *Field* trials in 1858-1859 demonstrated the superiority of the breech-loader (pin-fire) in all respects save penetration, wherein the muzzle-loader had about five per cent. the advantage. Central-fire guns came into use in the 'sixties.

Driving came into fashion about 1860. The system was fiercely denounced by the old school, but it steadily gained in popularity. The earliest detailed bag obtained by driving I can find is that on General Hall's shooting Weston Colville, near Newmarket. The party consisted of nine guns; and five days' driving, 8th to 12th January 1858 inclusive, produced a bag of 2,155 birds. The first day's total was the smallest, 327 birds, but it was blowing a hurricane: the last was the heaviest, 724, shot in a high wind. In January 1868 General Hall had another shoot of four days, which produced a bag relatively heavier, namely 1,940 birds, killed by nine guns. The largest individual bag on one day was 51½ brace killed by Lord Huntingfield on the 28th. Lord Huntingfield had also the largest total for the four days, 162 brace.[1]

An extraordinary bag was made by the late Maharajah Duleep Singh at Elveden in September 1876. Shooting on nine days between the 1st and the 15th inclusive, he killed to his own gun 1,265 brace of partridges, his heaviest bag being made on the 8th, when he killed 780 birds on Hall Farm, Eriswell: these were hand-reared birds; shot walking and driving. The Maharajah—one of the quickest shots

[1] *Field*, 1868.

in England—used a little over 1,000 cartridges to make this bag of 390 brace.

At Elveden in 1885 three guns, shooting on fifteen days in September, killed 6,509 birds (3,254½ brace): the 23rd yielded the heaviest bag, 428 brace. Some very heavy bags have been made on Mr. Arthur Blyth's Essex shootings in the parishes of Elmdon, Heydon, and Chrishall: in one day, season 1898-1899, 1,076 birds (seven guns), the record for that season in England. This was nearly equalled in the following season, when a day's driving (seven guns), produced 1,021 birds. Some very heavy bags have been made at The Grange, Alresford, Hants, one of the finest shootings, owned by one of the finest shots, in England. In 1877 the bag was 11,015 partridges: in 1897 it was 9,102. A wonderful bag was made one day in November of the year last named, when 730½ brace were killed.

No man has better described the modern partridge drive than Mr. Stuart Wortley from his shooting stool:—

'. . . Again your thoughts fly off; to the tropical marsh and the snorting rush of the wounded rhino through the reeds: to your shares in the new drifts in Mashonaland, and their possible value; to the horse that failed by a short head to land the "1,000 to 30,

twice" that might have saved you; to the dire confusion following, and your flight by reason of this to Afric's coral strand; to the cares and complications, the duns and dilemmas of London life. And as these almost bring you back to consciousness, a fresher gust of breeze sweeps down the fence, and—"Hold up those birds there, on the left; hold 'em up, hold 'em up!" The clear voice of Marlow, prince of the partridge-drivers, ringing out from the down-wind side, the crack of his whip, and the rattle of his horse's feet tell you that he is already round and into the turnips, and with a sharp whirring rattle, like the flutter of a moth's wing in a cardboard box, three birds are over the fence on the left, and almost on you before you see them. Up and round you swing, killing one stone dead, but the second was too far, and they are gone. Involuntary you look at your neighbour, a man there is no deceiving, for you know you were caught napping, and ought to have killed one of those in front of you, and the little half-sarcastic glance out of the corner of his right eye, though he never moves his head, tells you he saw it all.

'"Over, gentlemen—over the right!" is now the cry, and with a whirr that is almost a roar, a big lot breaks all over the fence to your right and in front. Now thoroughly awake, you kill three neatly, quickly

followed by a smart right and left—one in front and one behind—at a brace that come straight at you, immediately followed by misses with both barrels at one hanging along the fence and inclined to go back over the beaters. You strike him underneath with the second, he winces, rises a little, and just as he seems to turn is crumpled up dead by the professor on your left, a beautiful long cross shot, and you are fain to touch your hat and acknowledge a clean wipe. But now they come thick, and being just angry enough, you settle into form; for though your left arm feels like iron, and your grip on the fore-end like a vice, yet your actions are getting the looseness and your style the freedom that good form, confidence, and lots of shooting inspire, and you begin to "play the hose upon them" properly. Here and there a miss, sometimes two running, generally poking shots at birds which have passed close by while you were changing guns, and which somehow baffle you against the rising stubble behind. Why, you don't know, but you miss three or four in the same place and in the same way, though otherwise you are "all right."

'A great big lot, three or four coveys packed together, pours out at the upper end over the left hand, and, swinging round in the wind, heads straight down the line of guns. Here they come, streaming

high and fast, getting a broadside from each of the men on your left. "One—two" with your first gun, —"three—four" with the second—the last a beauty, and as they come clattering down like cricket balls about the head of your right-hand neighbour, you feel you have done your duty.

'A hare leaps through a run in the fence bottom, sits foolishly with ears laid back for a second, and then dashes for it past you. Let her go, she will do to breathe the farmer's greyhounds in February; "here's metal more attractive," for birds are still coming. But the wimpering of your retriever at the close view of the forbidden fur, and the consequent objurgations of the keeper behind, sufficiently distract you to make you snap at and miss an easy bird in front with your first, and turn and fiercely drive it into him much too close with your second.

'"D—n the hare," you mutter aloud as you change your gun; but the men are getting near, you hear the whish and rustle of the flags, a few more desultory lots come screaming over, and pretty it is, looking down the line to see them drop out as they pass, for the performers on either side of you are picked from the best in England. A few more "singletons" to each gun, all killed but one, at

which four barrels are fired, and which towers far away back.

'"Anything to pick up this side, gentlemen?" sings out Marlowe; in another minute he and his horse come crashing through the gap, the white smocks and flags are peeping through unforseen holes in the fence, all the dogs are loose and ranging far and wide, the guns and loaders scattered, picking up in all directions, and the drive of the season is over.

'Seventy-five brace in the single drive, of which forty birds you can honestly claim, having laid their corpses in a fair row ere they are hurled by the old pensioner into his sack, and you find yourself shouted, whistled, nay sworn at, to get on to the next drive.'

PHEASANT SHOOTING

IT is impossible to say at what date the modern system of pheasant shooting in its simplest form came into vogue. Daniel may have had in mind some elementary kind of 'battue' (has any one ever heard that word spoken?) when he wrote the declamation against the 'thoughtless propensity to kill all the game possible' quoted in the last chapter; and having regard to the fact that at this time (1813) in any given bag partridges formed the very large majority, it is possible that the pheasants included in these two were hand-reared (of which more anon) and were driven over the guns:

'On 28th January 1812 John Moseley, Esq., of Tofts, Norfolk, accompanied by *eight* friends, within *five hours* shot 8 partridges, 12 hares, 1 woodcock, 28 rabbits, 275 pheasants. Total 325, notwithstanding nearly *six hundred* pheasants had been bagged on that manor only.'

'The following is a list of game, etc., shot *this season* (1812) upon the Manor of Riddlesworth in Norfolk, the residence of Thomas Thornhill, Esq. Hares 574, partridges 725, pheasants 701, rabbits

492, snipes 49, woodcocks 6. Total, 2,548. About 3,000 rabbits have also been killed by the keepers with nets, etc.'

A century ago the accepted method of shooting pheasants was over spaniels. The principal requirement in the dog was that he should be steady from hares: a spaniel which had 'any taint of the *hound* in his pedigree, although generations back, will be sure to hunt *hare* in preference to winged game, and the stock may be crossed everlastingly, may attain *beauty*, *strength*, *symmetry*, yet the latent spark of the *harrier* will never be extinguished, and they will always show their predilection for hare whenever they have opportunity.'

The breed most celebrated was that of the Duke of Newcastle, known as the Clumber, after the ducal seat. The progenitors of the breed had been given to the reigning Duke by the Duc de Noailles about the middle of the eighteenth century: these Clumbers, 'springing spaniels' or 'springers,' were famed for their steadiness, and judging from the frequency with which portraits of such dogs were painted during the latter portion of the century, they were highly prized. Mr. Hoare had a breed of spaniels of which it was said they would find a hare, but follow no further than they saw it: they would 'no more run hares than

they would sheep,' but they possessed noses so fine that 'neither woodcock nor pheasant could escape their search.' Daniel says that he himself possessed spaniels so excellent that after refusing one hundred and fifty guineas for six brace and a half, he was asked to put his own price on them. Daniel must have stocked a veritable cemetery before he got dogs up to his standard, for he tells us that he 'purchased at various times, at least four score spaniels, all with the *best* of characters, but which, with the exception of *four brace*, were regularly consigned to the *halter* for incorrigible *hare hunting*.' The dogs which eventually brought him so much credit were bred from Mr. Hoare's: he purchased them on that gentleman's decease. Pointers with bells on their collars were sometimes used in the coverts, but they did not answer. Colonel Hawker preferred to spaniels a 'very high couraged old pointer that would keep near (his master) and would, on being told, break his point and dash in and put the pheasants to flight before they could run out of shot,' and he was not alone. A writer in the *Sporting Magazine* of 1815-1816 (vol. iv.) says that well-bred spaniels have been neglected of late years in favour of pointers, which answer all purposes in light coverts throughout the season.

Colonel Hawker, by the way, in his *Instructions to*

Modern Pheasant Shooting.

Painting by G. D. Armour.

G. L. HAMOUR

Young Sportsmen makes an observation which may contain a hint at the germ of the modern system:—

'. . . Although to explore and beat several hundred acres of coppice it becomes necessary to have a *party* with *spaniels*, yet on such expeditions we rarely hear of *any one* getting much game to his own share, except some sly old fellow who has shirked from his companions to the *end of the wood*, where the pheasants, and particularly the *cock* birds, on hearing the approach of a rabble *are all running*, like a retreating army, and perhaps flying in his face faster than he can load and fire.'

The example of the sly old fellow would be followed by others less astute: and what more probable than that in course of time all the guns, as a matter of course, took up their station at the end of the wood and left it to beaters to drive the birds over them?

However this may be, the modern system, in the rough, had come into favour by the year 1829. Hear Colonel Cook, M.F.H.[1] on the subject: the gallant colonel's antipathy to 'grandes batues' apparently did not extend to the refreshments provided:—

'. . . The great mania for game, and the useless quantity of it with which we find most coverts glutted, is a great misfortune to Fox-hunting. For some time (may I be allowed to say) there has been a war

[1] *Observations on Fox-hunting.*

between the pheasant and the fox; during which period (what may seem a little extraordinary, and I state it with regret) the former has generally been victorious. Still, I am no enemy to shooting, particularly to partridge-shooting, because it is an active amusement and a healthy exercise, without both of which, to my mind, no sport can exist. I never could make up my mind to go to any of their *batues*. I won't say that the danger attending them has kept me away, though it is by no means trifling, for the accidents we read of far exceed in number those which occur in fox-hunting; and surely a fall from a horse is better than being shot by a friend.

Mr. H. A. Bryden (*Victoria County History of Sussex*) says there is authentic record of two Horsham sportsmen who, having business at Chichester, shot their way thither across country, two days' journey, and home again after transacting their affairs. On the other hand, there were properties in the county where the game was carefully preserved and visitors were kept in strict order. This is from the *Sporting Magazine* of 1805:—

'As a piece of necessary information for sportsmen, the following rules are hung up in the breakfast-room of a shooting lodge in Sussex:—

Killing a hen pheasant . . .	£1 1 0
Shooting at ditto	0 10 6

Shooting at a pheasant on the ground or in a tree	1	1	0
Shooting at ditto at more than 40 yards unless wounded	0	5	0
Shooting two or more partridges at one shot	0	10	6
Shooting at ditto on the ground . .	1	1	0
Shooting at ditto at more than 45 yards if not before wounded . . .	0	5	0
Shooting a hare in her form . .	0	5	0

'Half the above fines go to the poor of the parish, the other half to the keepers.'

This document is illuminating in more ways than one: it indicates that there still remained inept beings who had not fully mastered the Art of Shooting Flying and were not to be trusted within range of a sitting bird or hare.

It was in the same year (1805) that the 'principal noblemen, gentlemen, and land owners of Kent, to the number of sixty-three, very commendably signed and published a resolution not to shoot partridges, on account of the backwardness of the harvest, till the fourteenth of September.' From which it would seem that sportsmen who might try to shoot their way across country in Kent would have found obstacles.

Now let us make a cast forward to the period when the 'battue' was producing huge bags of game before a mingling of muzzle and breech-loaders, and

being more fiercely anathematised by those who held it unsportsmanlike than ever it was in the days of Daniel. This bag made at Bradgate Park, Leicestershire, by Lord Stamford and Warrington and his party in 1864, was said to be the most 'extraordinary kill of game on record':—

	Part.	Pheas.	'Cock.	Snipe.	Hares.	Rabbits.	Various.
Jan. 4 .	1	690	26	...	328	812	5
,, 5 .	...	1822	24	...	258	225	6
,, 6 .	2	338	2	1	220	2534	5
,, 7 .	1	1195	7	1	54	331	12
	4	4045	59	2	860	3902	28

Grand total, 8,900 head. Thirteen guns on three days, fourteen on the 5th, when the largest number of pheasants were killed: Lord Huntingfield and General Hall, both crack shots, were of the party.

The bag made at Croxeth in November 1883, may be added:—

	Part.	Pheas.	Hares.	Rabbits.
Nov. 20 . .	9	1444	310	10
,, 21 . .	20	2373	319	123
,, 22 . .	31	1415	175	70
,, 23 . .	33	804	255	22
	93	6036	1359	225

Woodcock, wild duck, and snipe swelled the total. Six guns shot on three days and seven on the 22nd.

There is, however, no particular object to be gained by enumerating heavy bags of pheasants. They are merely matters of rearing, organization, and marksmanship; for whatever its detractors may find to say against the modern system, none denies that a 'tall' pheasant, coming down with a bias to right or left, is the most difficult shot any bird can give. Here is a picture of covert shooting in the 'sixties[1] :—

'Our readers will hardly require to be told that to kill five hundred pheasants in the season admits of nothing like regular battue shooting, at which nearly four times that number have been ere now killed in a day. But they will give a man ten or a dozen days of good sport, and, combined with running game, will afford as much shooting as a reasonable man can desire. A party of four guns, killing their thirty brace of pheasants, forty or fifty couple of rabbits, half as many hares, and two or three woodcocks, will have had more than fifty shots apiece. If they began at eleven and left off at four, deducting an hour for luncheon, they will have fired thirteen shots an hour, or more than one every five minutes; so that something very much less than this would be fairly entitled to be called an excellent day's sport. Twenty brace of pheasants, with hares and rabbits in proportion, is,

[1] *Cornhill Magazine*, 1865.

considering the shortness of a winter's day, ample for any four men who do not differ as much from a true sportsman as a glutton differs from an epicure.

'To one who cares for natural scenery, the best time of the year for covert shooting is November, when the foliage is thinned sufficiently to give you a fair chance at the pheasants, while the woods have not yet doffed their rich autumnal robes of gold and purple and crimson. A more utilitarian reason for the same preference exists likewise in the fact, that the weather in November is still tolerably warm, and that you are able to stand still without such a coldness arising upon the part of your toes and your fingers, that you seem to have lost all acquaintance with them. Moreover, in many parts of England, November is the best month for woodcocks. But if your only object is to make as good a bag as possible, it is better to wait till the leaves are quite off the trees; when the pheasants loom large and black between the bare poles athwart the dead December sky.

'A certain knack is required in shooting pheasants, as in shooting everything else, which until a man has mastered, he will go on missing what seem to both himself and lookers-on the easiest shots imagin-

able. There ought certainly to be no difficulty in hitting a pheasant. He does not dodge and twist like a snipe or a woodcock. To shoot as one does at partridges in the open when our bird is fifty yards away, is folly in covert, and what none but a novice would think of. Pheasants do not rise in covies and bother us in that way. They make a great noise, no doubt, about launching themselves before the public: but that is just a bit of bounce to which one soon gets used, and, after a time, ceases to impress one at all, except perhaps by lending additional gusto to the act of stopping them. We believe the chief reason why men miss a pheasant is, in the first place, that he flies a great deal quicker than he seems to fly; and, in the second place, that they do not always wait till he has done rising, which is generally possible to do without letting him get out of shot, and then firing just as he steadies himself for a straight flight. To kill pheasants, or indeed any birds coming over your head, is an art by itself. If you wait till they are perpendicular, you must give the gun a little swing backwards as you pull; but it is better to breast them if you must shoot, for the shots are unlikely to enter the breast, and probably take fatal effect in the head, neck, or belly.

'To shoot a covert properly, the men and beaters should all walk in a line, gunner and beater alternately. We are here, of course, speaking of coverts where that is possible. Many are so thick that it is quite impossible to shoot inside them; and in that case the guns are stationed outside. But the other plan is ten times the more pleasant one, as admits of a little sociability, seasoned with a few bets, and streaked with a vein of mild chaff. There is no trouble at all in *finding* pheasants and rabbits, if you know they are there. In the coverts they must be, or else, the latter, at least, in the hedgerows. So you beat out the coverts before lunch, and the hedges afterwards, unless upon a day especially set apart for the slaughter of pheasants in all the coverts on the ground.

'A party of four or five intimate friends for a day of this kind is uncommonly jolly. By the time the winter shooting has arrived, men have had the first keen edge of their desire taken off; and though they enjoy the sport as much as ever, they are not so nervously anxious about it as on the first of September. The consequence is that there is generally more *fun* going on with a party of this kind than in partridge shooting; also, it is not made quite so much a toil of. You start

after a good—perhaps late—breakfast, and a lounge over the fire afterwards, discussing anything but the subject on hand, and giving no one to suppose, as you infallibly do in September, that in your opinion the world was created for the sake of shooting. There is no particular skill required in choosing your coverts or beating your ground. The nearest is the best to begin with.

This from Daniel (1813) is interesting:—

'There is a beautiful variety of the pheasant with a white ring round the neck; of these the Earl of Berkeley has a considerable quantity at Cranford Bridge: except the white neck feathers they appear in size, and the rest of their plumage, exactly to resemble the common.'

P. colchicus has almost reached the status of a 'beautiful variety' in our day!

P. torquatus must be, on the average, a good deal heavier than the old English bird of a century ago. Daniel in the supplementary volume of *Rural Sports* (1813) says: 'An uncommon sized *Pheasant* was shot in January, 1810, in the Plantations belonging to E. L. Irton, Esq., near Whitehaven, which weighed *fifty-six ounces*, and measured, from the bill to the extremity of the tail, *one yard five inches!*' A former owner of my copy has added to this a

marginal note to the effect that he, J. T. L., had killed one of 54 oz. A bird of 3½ lbs. or 3¾ lbs. is now considered one of normal weight. In 1859 the *Field* mentioned a bird which weighed 5¾ lbs.; the heaviest pheasant known (*Field*, 14th August, 1875) weighed one ounce under 6 lbs. Maise-fed birds attain to a greater weight than others. The increase in size has followed development of the hand-rearing system.

The connection of the hand-reared pheasant with sport is rather misty until the nineteenth century. In old days the birds were bred as poultry. Palladius, whose work on Husbandry is assigned to about 1420, gives directions for their management: you were to take none of more than one year old, as birds above that age were 'infecunde': you were to allot one cock to every two hens and require each hen to sit on 20 eggs: 'common' hens might be used for hatching: one such should be given 15 pheasants' eggs. The chicks were fed for the first fifteen days on boiled barley sprinkled with wine: after that, bruised wheat, locusts and ants' eggs. We can trace the bird in its domestic character for about three hundred years from the time of Palladius, but there is at least room for the supposition that it was sometimes turned out for sport. In the six-

teenth century there was a royal game preserve round London, which extended from Westminster to St. Giles in the Fields and thence to Islington, Hampstead, Highgate and Hornsey Park, and Henry VIII. maintained at Westminster 'a frenche Preste the fesaunt breder.'[1] Henry, as we know, was a true sportsman, and it is only reasonable to think that he flew his hawks at the 'fesants' so raised.

If His Majesty hawked hand-reared pheasants, no doubt his subjects did the same; but whether for falconry or merely to have their necks wrung for the table, pheasants continued to be kept in captivity. The act of 1603-1604 already mentioned (1 Jac. I. c. 27, § 4) forbade the sale or purchase to sell again of any deer, hare, partridge, or pheasant; but it made an exception in favour of birds 'reared and brought up in house or houses or brought from beyond sea.' There is among the old accounts of Hatfield House (*Victoria County History of Herts.*) mention of the purchase in 1629 of 'hens to set on pheasants' eggs,' the foster-mothers costing 1s. each. In 1727 we find Richard Bradley, in his *General Treatise of Husbandry and Gardening*, combating the idea that pheasant-rearing was difficult and expensive: he had found by experience that where pinioned birds were allowed due liberty, and not more than

1 Privy Purse Expenses of Henry VIII., 22nd December, 1532.

one cock was put with seven hens, they 'brought their young to perfection for a trifling expense.'

The pheasant-rearing business, however, was not much practised thirty years later; for the edition of Bradley's work published in 1757 contains no reference to it, and the omission seems to be explained by the editor's remark that they had found it possible to leave out a good deal which was not important. J. Mortimer in 1761 (*Whole Art of Husbandry*) says that by reason of the trouble and expense few people reared pheasants except near London. In the neighbourhood of the capital the business was followed by men who sold the birds to gentlemen as 'rarities: especially those that have the white breed and such as are very fine coloured.' In 1826, at Chippenham Park, Cambridgeshire, Mr. Tharpe and his party made a bag of 630 pheasants, of which 300 were either white or pied: the white and pied birds were then much admired as a rare variety. A writer in the *Annals of Agriculture* (vol. xxxix., 1800) remarks that pheasants may be reared in almost any quantity 'by importing the eggs from France and setting them under common hens. It has been practised with great success by some noblemen and others desirous of stocking their woods and plantations.'

WILD FOWLING

'THIS SPORT' says George Edie in his *Treatise on English Shooting* (1772) 'Though very good when wild fowl are plenty is very little practised by Gentlemen owing to the several disagreeable circumstances attending it.'

It must be admitted that the account of wild fowling as pursued on the Hampshire coast, given by the Rev. William Gilpin,[1] suggests keenness as the first essential.

'Fowling and Fishing are indeed on this coast commonly the employments of the same people. He who in summer with his line or net plies the shores when they are overflowed by the tide, in winter with his gun, as evening draws on, runs up in his boat among the little creeks which the tide leaves in the mud—lands and lies in patient expectation of his prey.

'Sea fowl usually feed by night, when in all their multitudes they come down to graze on the Savannahs of the shore. As the sonorous cloud advances (for their noise in the air resembles a pack of hounds in full cry) the attentive fowler listens which way they bend their course: perhaps

[1] *Remarks on Forest Scenery and other Woodland Views*, written 1781, published 1791.

he has the mortification to hear them alight at too great a distance for his gun (though of the longest barrel) to reach them: and if he cannot edge his boat round some winding creek, which it is not always in his power to do he despairs of success that night: perhaps however he is more fortunate, and has the satisfaction to hear the airy noise approach nearer, till at length the host settles in some plain upon the edge of which his boat is moored: he now as silently as possible, primes both the pieces anew (for he is generally double-armed) and listens with all his attention: it is so dark that he can take no aim, for if he could discern the birds they would also see him; and being extremely timorous would seek other pasture: though they march with noise they feed in silence: some indistinct noises, however, issue from so vast a concourse: he directs his piece therefore towards the sound, fires at a venture, and instantly catching up his other gun, discharges it where he supposes the flock to rise on the wing: his gains for the night are now decided and he has only to gather his harvest: he immediately puts on his mud pattens (flat square pieces of board, which the fowler ties to his feet, that he may not sink in the ooze) ignorant yet of his success, and goes

Wild Fowling:
Flighting.

Painting by G. D. Armour.

groping about in the dark in quest of his booty, picking up sometimes many, and perhaps not one: so hardly does the poor fowler earn a few shillings, exposed in an open boat, during a solitary winter night to weather as it comes, rain, hail, or snow, on a bleak coast, a league probably from the beach, and often liable, without great care, to be fixed in the mud where he would become an inevitable prey to the returning tide. I have heard one of these poor fellows say he never takes a dog with him in these expeditions, because no dog could bear the cold which he is obliged to suffer: and after all, others frequently enjoy more from his labours than himself, for the tide often throws next day, on different parts of the shore, many of the birds which he had killed, but could not find in the night.'

The pursuit of the 'Punt Shooters' says Daniel, is hazardous, especially when there is much ice as the craft may be nipped in the floes. The punt shooter's gun 'carried as much as a little cannon' and was used in the same way as the stanchion-gun invented a few years later by Colonel Peter Hawker; the fowler lying in the bottom of the craft with the gun pointed over the bow ready to pull the trigger, as soon as he came near enough to 'rattle with his feet on the bottom of his punt,'

whereby having sprung the fowl, he fired and 'cut a lane through their ranks.'

Colonel Peter Hawker had condemned the Hampshire punts as unsafe, and his opinion having been confirmed by fatalities, 'these regular western channel gunners' adopted an entirely new mode of getting at the birds:—

'They start off generally in the afternoon (provided the tide serves, so as to be low enough at the proper time), keeping as close as possible to the shore, and going before the wind, till they arrive at the leeward end of their beat; the whole track of which for one night's work, may be about five or six miles. They go ashore, and either get into a pot-house, if they have a sixpence to spend (which is not always the case), or lounge about the shore till day-light disappears, and the birds begin to fly; having first put all "*in order*"; that is, to draw out their mould shot, which they generally have in, for the chance of a goose "going down along"; put in smaller shot; and regulate their gun so that it will bear about eighty yards, when the punt is on dry mud. No sooner are the widgeon pitched than off they set, in tarpaulin dresses; and looking more like chimney-sweeps than gunners, crawling on their knees, and shoving

this punt before them on the mud. No matter whether light or dark, few birds or many, *bang!* goes the gun;—and no sooner have they picked up what few birds are readily to be found, or missed the fowl, which they very frequently do, as the punt, by even a few periwinkles, might be thrown off the line of aim, they proceed again; thus travelling all night (by "launching" over the mud, and rowing across the creeks) in a direct line, similar to the march of an *army of coots*. I should not omit to mention, that, as the birds will seldom allow them to get into the punt to fire, some of them draw the trigger with a string at the end of a ramrod, and others creep up on one side, and pull it off with the finger. This is perhaps the most laborious, and the most filthy work in all the department of wildfowl shooting; and not only that, but it so ruins the country, that in a very short time it entirely "breaks the haunt of the birds," without having yielded any material advantage to those who adopt the system. As some corroboration of this, I need only observe, that a family, who were the leaders in this way, and who are by far the best launchers in Hampshire, have of late been reduced to absolute distress for a livelihood.' . . .

Mr. A. E. Knox in his *Game Birds and Wild Fowl* (1850) has given a capital description of the expert punt gunner at work :—

'. . . . Not far from the narrow entrance to the harbour I found a coastguard-man perched on the summit of a mud wall, and attentively reconnoitring some distant object through his spyglass. From this position he commanded an extensive view of the haven which—as it was now about full tide—spread like a great lake into the interior. The absence of large vessels, and indeed of almost all kinds of sailing craft, from this secluded spot, would at first strike a stranger with surprise, but at low water the mystery would be cleared up: the scene would then be entirely changed: a great extent of flat mud would be left by the receding waters, in the middle of which the shallow and devious channel might be perceived winding like a silver thread on its way to the sea.

'At this moment, however, the tide was at the highest, and a glance into the distance was sufficient to show me the object which had attracted the man's observation. Several flocks of wild fowl, apparently brent geese, widgeon, scaup, ducks, pochards, and tufted ducks, were swimming near the further side of the estuary, while in the midst

of these, like a naval squadron among a fleet of fishing boats, sailed a noble herd of wild swans. I soon perceived that they were too far from the shore to admit of my getting a shot at them, and had therefore no choice but either to wait patiently in expectation of some of the party separating from the main body and wandering up one of the narrow creeks on the opposite side of the harbour, where by taking a circuitous route, and availing myself of any intervening object that might project above the flat banks of the swamp, I might perhaps succeed in stalking them, or else to proceed in search of a less noble quarry. I at once chose the former alternative. As I swept the shores of the estuary with the spy-glass, I had the satisfaction of observing that my sport was not likely to be anticipated by any wandering gunner, who might have perceived the birds already, and perhaps venture on a random shot before I could commence operations, or even decide on the best mode of carrying them into effect. There was not a human being within sight, nor could I discover a single boat on the surface of the water. I had hardly congratulated myself on this fortunate circumstance, when a distant object arrested my attention. It looked at first like a plank of wood,

or the trunk of a dead tree, as it floated down a narrow creek, and seemed to be carried here and there at the mercy of the current; still there was something suspicious about it which prevented me from looking at anything else, and I continued to watch its movements with increasing anxiety.

'On reaching the open water it turned round, apparently in an eddy of the tide, and gave me an opportunity of examining its outline as the broadside was turned towards me for an instant. There was nothing, however, in this hasty glimpse calculated to increase my alarm; on the contrary, I now felt more than ever convinced that I was looking at an inanimate log, and my only fear at this moment was that it might be drifted by the tide—which would begin to ebb—or by the irregular course of the channel, to that part of the harbour where the hoopers were still sailing in apparent security, and alarm them prematurely. On a sudden, however, it seemed to alter its course and to move slowly under the shadow of the bank, or, as the sailors term it, to "hug the shore": it was apparently propelled by some hidden power, for it no longer wheeled about, but advanced steadily with one end foremost, and as I watched its movements while it crept cautiously along, I fancied every now and

then that I could distinguish the slight splash of a paddle, and my heart sank within me. It was evidently the gun-boat of a wild-fowl shooter, and of one who was no novice in the craft; but when the first feeling of disappointment had passed away, I easily persuaded myself that I should derive more pleasure from witnessing his operations than in spoiling his sport—which would have been the result of a premature movement on my part, for he was yet half a mile from the objects of his pursuit—but it occurred to me at the same moment, that I might even manage to convert him into an unconscious but important ally in contributing to my —the jackal's—share of it. Taking, therefore, a hasty survey of the harbour and its shores, I saw that if I could contrive to conceal myself at a certain point on a long and narrow belt of shingle at some distance, over which the swans would probably fly when returning to the sea, I might perhaps have the good luck to intercept them. I lost no time in carrying out this plan: The coast-guard-man ferried me across the mouth of the estuary, after which, by taking a wide circuit and availing myself of the nature of the ground where it was possible to mask my advance, I succeeded at last in reaching the desired point, and having

were rising, one by one, from the water. It was an anxious moment. The swans were still there, but they had ceased to feed; their heads were turned towards me, and I soon perceived that the entire flotilla had gradually approached nearer to me. Now or never, thought I. I glanced rapidly at the advancing gun-boat—almost at the same instant a small puff of smoke issued from its further extremity, succeeded by a pigmy report, and up rose the entire host of water-fowl—swans and all—the snow-white plumage of the hoopers standing out in bold relief against the murky sky. Then a huge volume of smoke and a bright flame burst from the prow, followed by the thunder of the great gun itself—off at last!—and as it cleared a passage through the winged mass between us, several of the motley crowd fell to rise no more: almost at the same instant the head and shoulders of a man were protruded from a covering of sea-weed, under which he had hitherto been concealed, and the next moment he was vigorously plying his paddles in all the excitement of a regular cripple chase. My turn had at length arrived: restraining the ardour of my dog, who only waited for a word to take an active share in the pursuit, I turned my attention to a detachment of swans, about five

in number, which had apparently escaped unhurt, and after wheeling once or twice over the bodies of their dead companions, uttering all the time their trumpet-like notes, were now gradually ascending and nearing my place of concealment. On they came, but suddenly their leader seemed to have discovered my position and veered round in an opposite direction, followed by all except one, who as he was passing overhead, fell a victim to my long gun. A brent goose almost at the same instant passed on the other side, and afforded an easy mark for the first barrel of my heavy double, while the second was discharged at a venture, but ineffectually, at a party of pochards—the last detachment of the fugitives, as they hurried back once more to the tempestuous but less treacherous waters of the channel. . . .'

For light on the sport in our own day we naturally turn to Sir Ralph Payne Gallwey, from whose *Letters to young Shooters*[1] the following is taken :—

'In this letter I will treat of Wildfowl-shooting as it exists in unprotected places, such as the great stretches of sea shore that are still free in many parts of our islands, and, I trust, may ever remain

[1] Third Series; Wild Fowling.

at the disposal of the humble fowler. Here we have a vastly different style of gunning: there is no certainty of sport in *this* case, you may depend upon it.

'You will find neither wild ducks nor teal waiting to be shot at their owner's fancy, after the fashion of a private preserve: nor will you discover a quiet refuge on land or water, that you may visit with every confidence of filling your bag. No: in this case you will have to work with a will for your ducks; you will have to exercise all your ingenuity to procure a couple or two; you will have to study their movements by day and night, and learn their natural haunts: and you will probably have to compete with a dozen other fowlers just as eager as yourself to obtain the birds!

'Under these circumstances, small wonder that the ducks are shy and often inaccessible, and you are forced to be satisfied with a very few of them as your share. Yet it is a healthy and interesting pursuit, and one in which a little success gives much content: for the pleasures of fowling are in no degree relative to the numbers slain, as three or four ducks killed, after a deal of thought and trouble, may easily give you greater satisfaction than, perhaps, thrice the number obtained without any difficulties.

'The fact is wild duck shooting by day on *unpreserved* ground or water *inland* is so uncertain that 'tis scarce worthy of mention: for in daylight the birds either avoid such a harassed neighbourhood, or select some safe retreat, as a large lake to rest on. The fowler has then little hope of sport till the evening flight. It may be well worth his while though to visit at *daybreak*, if the weather is exceptionally stormy, any pools or marshes he has *previously* discovered the birds frequent at night to feed: for in gales and snow, ducks will sometimes remain an hour after daylight on their feeding grounds, hesitating it may be, to face the strong wind or pelting sleet that will beat against them as they fly back, perhaps several miles, to their usual haunts for the day. Along the shore of an estuary of the sea there is, however, always a chance of sport, and the wilder and colder the weather the better for the fowler.

'On the tide there is, besides, a greater variety of birds to be seen, but few of which you are likely to shoot inland by day or night: you not only have the wild duck and teal but you may also, among others meet with widgeon, mergansers, scoters, scaup, brent geese, the three large sea divers and all kinds of shore birds, such as

godwits and curlew and a medley of smaller waders as well.

'You should lie in wait on that part of the shore *along* which the wind blows: for as the birds fly about which they will continually do in boisterous weather, they are certain to *head* the wind, and from your position they are likely to pass across you within shot. If you are posted with the wind blowing directly from land to sea, you will not make a bag, for no ducks or shore birds will come within range except those that intend to fly inland, which will naturally not be many in the day time.

'If the wind blows *towards* the land the only birds that will offer you shots are those which head the wind as they fly from the land to the sea; and these will be very few you may be sure. But if you can dig a hole, deep enough to hide you up to the shoulders, on some part of the shore near low-water mark (or are able to conceal yourself behind a natural or roughly made shelter), and it is a stormy day, with the wind blowing, as I have explained, you will certainly obtain shots and plenty of them, *if*, of course, fowl are in the vicinity.

'Your best chance of sport is when there is a

gale at sea, and a hard frost: for the ducks, geese, and shore birds will then be constantly on the wing in search of food, which is not in severe weather, either by day or night, so accessible to them as usual.

'A good position to ensconce yourself in is the extremity of a promontory that runs some little distance from the shore: for wild fowl of all kinds seem to make a landmark of a projecting point of rock or sand, and will fly over the end of it in their passages from one part of an estuary to another.

'Of all favourable places for this style of shooting, none equals the *last* piece of ooze-bank that is daily covered by the flowing tide, for it is there both ducks and waders will betake themselves when their other feeding and resting places are submerged.

'I have enjoyed rare sport in this position: but you will, I need hardly explain, require a man and boat in attendance not far distant when the flood makes a longer stay impossible. Be sure the boat in waiting on you contains spare oars and thowl pins: I was once nearly lost through my boatman breaking an oar in his struggles, against wind and wave, to arrive in time to save me

from a ducking, the tide having flowed more rapidly than usual over the small island of flat sand I had dug my shelter-pit in.

'It was indeed more exciting than amusing to watch the violent efforts of my rescuer in his endeavours to scull up to me with his one and only oar, the water meantime rising above my long boots, and nothing but the angry sea in view for a mile on every side.'